

THAT WHICH IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A compound represented by the formula:



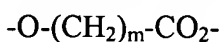
where

Z represents H or alkyl;

POLY and POLY' are poly(alkylene oxide) groups that can be the same or different and are represented by the formula $-(\text{CH}_2\text{CHRO})_n-\text{CH}_2\text{CHR}-$ in which R is H or alkyl, and n ranges from about 10 to about 4000;

Q represents a functional group; and

W represents a hydrolytically unstable linkage selected from



where m ranges from 1 to 10, and R_1 is $-\text{CH}_2-$, $-\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2-$ or $-\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)\text{CH}_2-$.

2. The compound of Claim 1, wherein Q is selected from the group consisting of aldehydes, carboxylic acids, active esters, active carbonates, sulfonate esters, amines, hydrazides, orthopyridyl disulfides, and thiols.

3. A compound represented by the formula:



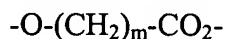
where

Z represents H or alkyl;

POLY and POLY' are poly(ethylene glycol) groups represented by the formula $-(\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O})_n-\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}-$ in which n ranges from about 10 to about 4000;

Q represents a functional group; and

W represents a hydrolytically unstable linkage selected from



where m ranges from 1 to 10, and R_1 is $-\text{CH}_2-$, $-\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2-$ or $-\text{CH}(\text{CH}_3)\text{CH}_2-$.

4. The compound of Claim 3, wherein Q is selected from the group consisting of aldehydes, carboxylic acids, active esters, active carbonates, sulfonate esters, amines, hydrazides, orthopyridyl disulfides, and thiols.